

## **Commencement of Second Phase of National Reconciliation Congress**

### **Statement by Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Washington, DC

August 18, 2007

The United States congratulates the participants in the Somalia National Reconciliation Congress on the completion of Phase One of the Congress and the progress achieved thus far. The resolution of long-standing conflicts between all clans, civil society, women's groups, religious authorities, and business leaders is the first step towards establishing lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

As the second phase of the Congress begins, I urge you to turn your attention toward the key political tasks now in front of you that are outlined in the "Roadmap to Governance, National Reconciliation, and Dialogue" and in the Transitional Federal Charter. They include achieving equitable representation by all key stakeholders in the Transitional Federal Institutions and addressing next steps in the transitional process.

For this Congress to be successful, it is critical that you engage in a genuine political dialogue that will ultimately lead to the formation of permanent, representative governing institutions. The United States renews its call on all Somali stakeholders to participate constructively in the Congress and to establish a roadmap for the remainder of the transitional process leading to national elections in 2009.

Drafted: AF/E: Nole Garey (647-8284)

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Cleared:

AF: J Frazer.....ok

AF/E: S Hamilton .....ok

AF/PD: J Schaming-Ronan.....ok

PA: G Gallegos ..... ok

S/P: W Wolman .....ok

D: G Delgado .....(info)

P: J Cassidy .....ok

DRL: K Gilbride .....ok

Nairobi: J Yates.....ok